

LESSONS LEARNED SUMMARY

This report summarizes the results of a Lessons Learned analysis undertaken in FY 2005, the final year of implementation of USAID's US-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP). This analysis identified the programmatic strengths (and weaknesses) exhibited by US-AEP over the last five years in its attempts to achieve targeted results. By focusing on how the program worked, rather than what the program worked on, this lessons learned activity aimed to distill views relevant to USAID and others in future regional programming efforts applicable across a variety of technical areas and sectors.

BACKGROUND

Over the past two decades, Asia has experienced some of the most dramatic economic growth in the world, significantly reducing poverty levels in many countries. However, the combination of rapid economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization has also contributed to deteriorating environmental conditions, as well as negative health and economic impacts throughout the region.

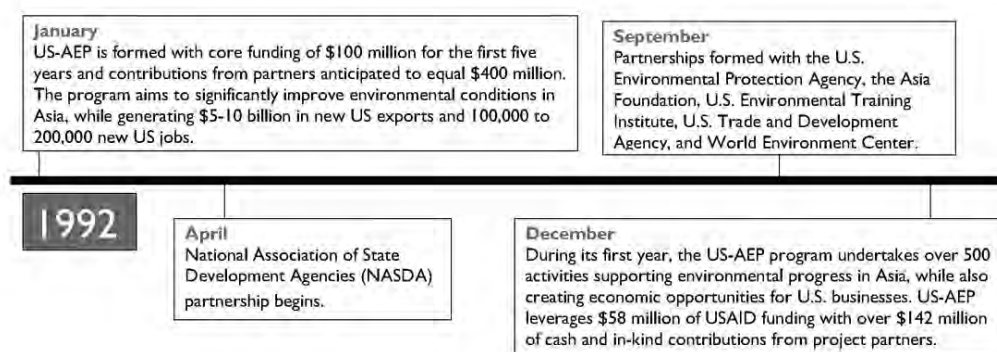
To respond to the challenge presented by these problems, President George H.W. Bush launched US-AEP by Presidential Initiative in January 1992. Led by USAID as a public-private program, US-AEP worked through direct peer-to-peer partnering to develop and implement practical solutions to environmental challenges, bringing experts and practitioners together to share

knowledge and to act directly and in concert to solve problems. Many activities created private-private and private-public partnerships and linkages that endure beyond the end of the program in fiscal year 2005.

“... a creative approach to address the challenge of balancing environmental protection with development.”

PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Throughout its more than 12 year history, US-AEP evolved to meet changing circumstances, both within the U.S. government and in the region. The timeline displayed across the bottom of the pages of this report shows highlights and milestones in US-AEP's history that



serve to illustrate the progression of the program over time. It is possible, from this progression, to identify three phases of program focus through which US-AEP moved:

- Phase 1: An emphasis on trade promotion activities with the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) as a key partner;
- Phase 2: A narrowed focus on greening of Asian businesses; and
- Phase 3: A shift to encouraging a “clean revolution” in Asia with a heightened focus on improved environmental governance and intra-regional cooperation.

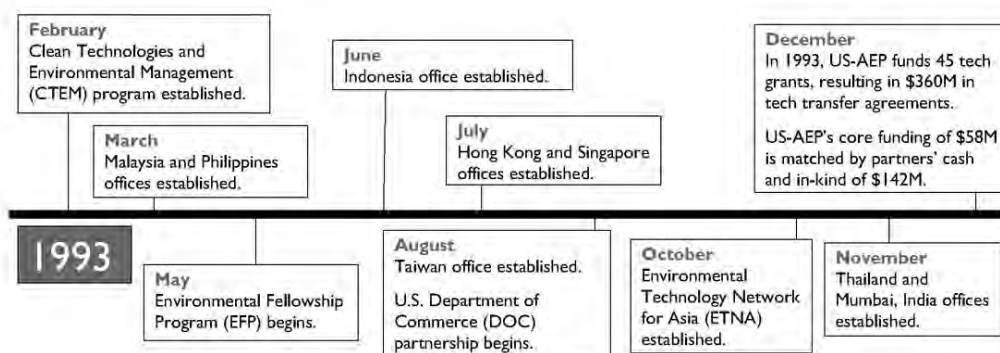
While the program experienced significant change over its life, one constant was US-AEP’s focus on “partnerships” as a defining feature.

This lessons learned activity, like the Strategic Objective Closeout Report that it supports, focuses on the third phase of the program that covered the final five years of implementation, FY 2001 through FY 2005. This period was marked by several significant program and management changes that had a significant impact on the implementation of the program. Key changes in this period included:

- The withdrawal of DOC involvement in 2002;
- A reduction in the number of countries participating in the program (related to the withdrawal of DOC), from eleven in early 2001 to six primary implementation countries (India, Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam); and
- A shift in program management in mid-FY2003 from USAID/Washington to the USAID Regional Development Mission/Asia (RDM/A) in Bangkok.

US-AEP worked with numerous implementing partners and literally hundreds of local program partners throughout its history. Implementing partners during the final five years of the program included:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), accessed through an interagency agreement (IAA);
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, also accessed through an IAA;
- A number of contractors/cooperators: the Institute for International Education, the Louis Berger Group, PADCO, the National Association of State Development Agencies



(NASDA), the Alliance to Save Energy, and the International City Managers Association (ICMA).

- Organizations with cost-sharing agreements: the Council of State Governments, Global Technology Network (GTN) and Environmental Technology Network for Asia (ETNA), and The Asia Foundation; and
- Numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and professional associations in Asia and the U.S.

At the time of program completion in FY 2005, the number of implementing partners had been reduced, primarily with the departure of organizations more closely associated with the program's trade and technology transfer focus prior to the withdrawal of DOC.

LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons learned activity began with an extensive review and analysis of existing program documentation, which led to development of a questionnaire focused on frequently-cited, key program characteristics. Interviews were then conducted with selected program personnel from US-AEP country teams, implementing partner organizations, and local partners to obtain information on the perceived importance of certain program characteristics.

Important Program Characteristics: Interviewees were asked to rate the importance, from "essential" to "not important," of five US-AEP program characteristics that have been successfully used to achieve US-AEP's overall goal of promoting a clean revolution in Asia. Average ratings were calculated from the ratings provided (with equal weight given to all interviewee responses), resulting in the following overall ranking of key program characteristics:

Rank	Characteristic	Average Rating
1	Ability to leverage other resources	1.3
2	Programming flexibility/opportunism	1.5
3	Regional program implementation	2.0
4	Partnership approach	2.3
5	Use of exchanges	2.3

Ratings: 1) essential, 2) moderately important, 3) not too important, 4) not important



Significantly, none of the individuals interviewed suggested that any of these characteristics were unimportant to US-AEP's success. In fact, at least one interviewee ranked each characteristic as "essential." However, only two characteristics were cited by all interviewees as either essential or moderately important – *the ability to leverage additional resources and program flexibility*.

The reasons why US-AEP staff and partners viewed these operational characteristics as so important and the lessons learned from applying them are discussed in the remainder of this report.

Resource Leveraging: Outside resources leveraged by US-AEP included substantial in-kind contributions from local partners and complimentary funding from other donors. This leveraging was important for US-AEP because of the limited size of available US-AEP program resources (e.g., small grants and short-term technical assistance were generally limited to agreements and contracts valued at \$25,000 or less) and the large scale and varied nature of environmental challenges facing countries in the region.

Most US-AEP staff interviewed believed that leveraging additional resources was essential to US-AEP's success, both in ensuring commitment to achieving results among local partner organizations and in achieving broad and sustained project impacts.

While leveraging was uniformly cited across all US-AEP countries as essential to the program's success, it is interesting to note that the primary sources of leveraged funds often varied from country to country. In Thailand, for example, where bilateral donor assistance has been largely phased out in recent years, leveraged resources came primarily from local Thai partners themselves. These contributions included staff time and self-funding of travel on exchanges. In other countries, such as Indonesia, where international donors are still very active, leveraged funds from organizations like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as bilateral donors (e.g., Swiss Contact) were more common and important.

"Together US-AEP and EPA provide unique knowledge transfer resources and capabilities that complement the World Bank's technical assistance ..."

P. ILLANGO VAN, SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST, WORLD BANK

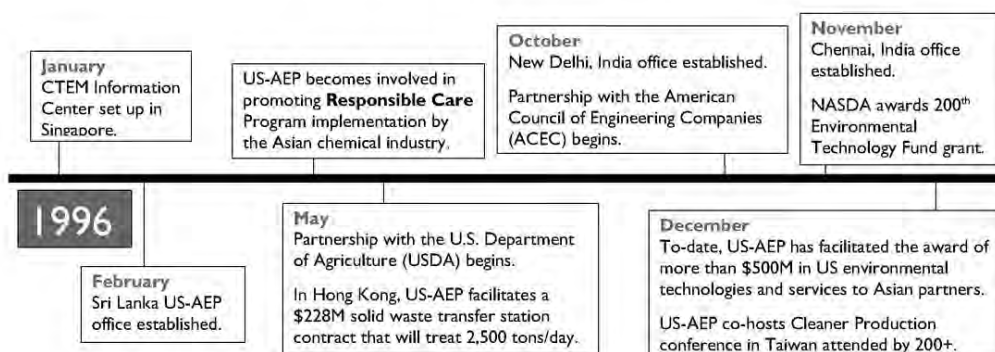


It is also interesting to note that among US-AEP staff, the ability to successfully leverage resources (ranked first as a key program characteristic) was strongly linked to the development of partnerships (ranked fourth among the top five program characteristics identified in this analysis). US-AEP staff generally expressed the opinion that the key to successfully leveraging resources was to *actively develop and maintain partner relationships*. These staff indicated that the long-term presence, high visibility, and wide recognition of US-AEP country programs allowed the development of these relationships with other donors and in-country sector leaders. Also, US-AEP's on-going and consistent commitment to addressing particular environmental challenges, such as the phase out of leaded fuel in several countries, established the credibility needed to attract outside resources.

US-AEP maintained and developed these relationships by strategically using flexible program funding. One way this was accomplished was through “gap filling” where small grants, technical assistance, or exchanges were used to advance larger initiatives supported by other donors and local partners. One example of this type of effort was an activity in Sri Lanka that supported a local NGO's efforts to improve women's livelihoods through the collection and sale of recyclables. A critical need in this project was improved recycling technology that would increase the value of the materials collected by the women involved in the project. US-AEP supplied technical assistance to improve the processing of recyclable plastics, tripling the value of the materials. The increased value of the product helped make the NGO's larger microfinance and livelihoods program viable and helped decrease the amount of waste flowing to the local municipal landfill by twenty percent.

Many program staff and partners also emphasized that successful leveraging often resulted from using program resources as catalysts to advance innovative solutions. This “venture capital” approach facilitated piloting of a number of successful technologies and policies. By demonstrating these successes, US-AEP was able to leverage subsequent large-scale support to expand these pilots, either with additional USAID or outside funding. For example, US-AEP initiated the Clean Air Program (CAP) in Puerto Princesa, Philippines, an innovative approach to improve municipal air quality, including special programs to reducing emissions from highly polluting three-wheeled taxis. CAP has been replicated in other Philippines cities, will now continue with funding from the Asian Development Bank.

Some interviewees suggested that additional resources might have been leveraged if US-AEP had done more to coordinate common efforts regionally. For example, although several US-



AEP country programs focused heavily on the promotion of lead free gasoline and improved fuel quality standards, these efforts were not closely coordinated at the regional level. Some interviewees suggested that if country level efforts had been more formally linked through the establishment of cooperative regional networks, it might have been possible to leverage additional donor support.

Program Flexibility: In addition to resource leveraging, another highly lauded US-AEP hallmark was the flexible nature of its activity support. Although individual country programs were guided by annual work plans, it was also possible to provide unplanned support through the use of small grants, technical assistance, and exchanges on short-notice for strategically important activities. This flexibility allowed for small but effective rapid responses to changing needs and emerging opportunities.

Over the period that US-AEP was active in Asia, many economic and political changes required adaptation of program support. US-AEP's flexible programming mechanisms allowed for rapid response to such changes, something that many other larger donor programs had difficulty doing. An excellent example of this was the effectiveness of US-AEP's assistance to the water supply sector in Indonesia.

“US-AEP is a speedboat among supertankers.”
US CONSUL GENERAL,
KOLKATA, INDIA

By the end of the 1990s, the combination of the regional economic downturn that began in 1997 and Indonesian government efforts to decentralize government operations was placing significant new management and financial burdens on local water utilities. While most donor assistance continued to focus on expanding water supply infrastructure through large-scale loan mechanisms, US-AEP quickly developed a set of activities supporting improved utility operational and financial management – a critical need at that time. These activities were highly successful in improving water utility management. Not only did they help to keep several participating utilities financially solvent, but many activity elements became models for subsequent donor programs.

US-AEP program flexibility also allowed the program to contribute significantly to many environmental policy developments in the region. Environmental policy change often happens quickly in response to a critical combination of political and economic factors, so-called tipping points. When these tipping points are reached, government officials are often



required to react quickly to implement new policies. Staff and partners noted several examples where US-AEP was able to greatly assist local officials in meeting these urgent challenges by flexibly providing technical assistance. For example, as the Government of Thailand moved to decentralize functions to provincial and local governments, local government officials became more directly responsible for implementing government programs, including implementing new directives regarding public participation in government decision-making on local environmental issues. US-AEP supported an activity that linked the City of Portland, Oregon and three Thai cities to assist these cities in developing public participation/public consultation procedures.

Although program flexibility helped leverage other resources and succeeded in promoting innovative and timely programming, staff and partners cautioned that a careful balance must be struck between flexible, rapid reaction to emerging needs and sufficient planning. Some US-AEP staff thought that when flexibility was overemphasized, programming lost the focus needed to ensure significant impact. Sufficient planning was also needed to allow for effective use of certain key project inputs. For example, it was sometimes difficult to quickly mobilize support from large institutional partners like the USEPA, who require significant lead time to arrange staff travel and prepare technical inputs.

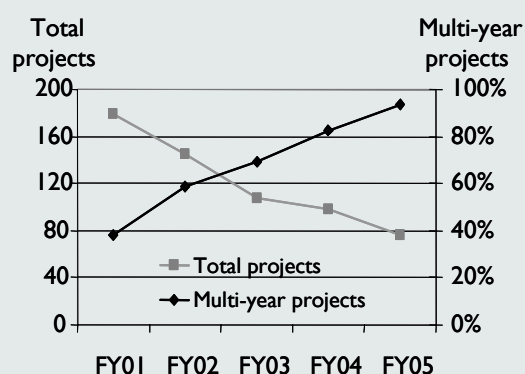
In addition, most staff and partners agreed that many of the more successful US-AEP supported initiatives were those involving long-term engagement and support. To successfully promote objectives like policy reform and institutional development, US-AEP needed to develop and follow through with long-term plans, strategies, and partner relationships. This notion is illustrated by the trend, over time, toward more complex, multi-year activities (see sidebar, following page). Consequently, although program flexibility was often useful, it was most successful when combined with careful planning and long-term commitment to particular initiatives.

Regional Nature: US-AEP was more than simply a number of individual country programs supported by a regional funding mechanism. Although each country program had unique characteristics and was designed in accordance with local priorities, the US-AEP regional framework allowed for efficient and effective use of many program resources, particularly U.S.-based inputs like those from USEPA. Country programs also benefited greatly from intra-regional sharing of experience and expertise and joint programming in common areas.



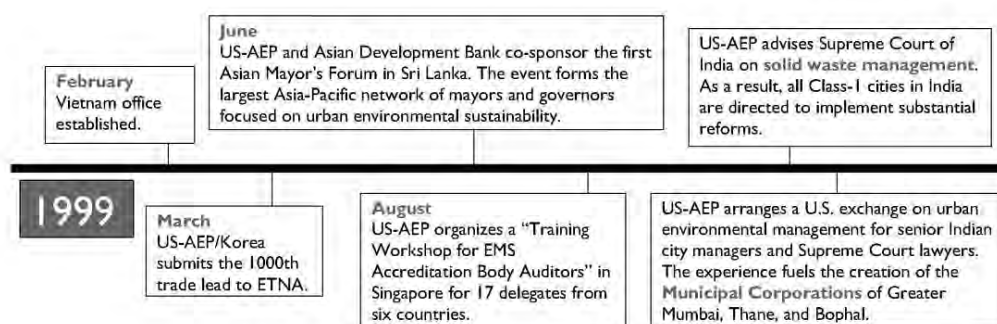
Trend toward more substantial activities:

FY 2001 to 2005 US-AEP country work plans name over 350 supported activities. Over time, however, the number of activities US-AEP supported annually shrank from a high of 180 in 2001 to fewer than 80 in 2005. While the number of supported activities shrank, the nature and extent of activity support evolved. Fewer one-year/one-off activities were supported and instead support grew for multi-year activities (see graphic). This programming change began after the withdrawal of DOC from the program as US-AEP became more aligned with USAID development objectives and trade and technology transfer were deemphasized. In addition, to develop these larger, more sustained initiatives, activities were increasingly supported using multiple funding mechanisms and involving multiple, interrelated components, e.g., combining capacity building with public awareness components and funding support via grants, technical assistance and exchanges. This multi-year, multi-faceted support led to many of the most significant and sustainable US-AEP activity outputs and impacts.

US-AEP activities (by year)

These intra-regional interactions grew in the program's final years as management of the program moved from Washington, D.C. to Bangkok and as the program became increasingly field-driven. One clear example of this growth in regional interconnectedness was the rise in the number of intra-regional exchanges. In contrast to the earlier years of the program, where most exchanges supported by US-AEP were Asia-to-U.S. exchanges, during the final five years more than 2,156 participants went on Asia-to-Asia exchanges, as compared with only 844 who went on Asia-to-U.S. exchanges. Some joint programming was also developed, e.g., the watershed management program support by U.S. counterparts from Maryland's Chesapeake Bay that linked on-going efforts in Thailand's Thachin River basin with similar efforts in the Philippines' Laguna Bay.

The opportunity to interact with Asian peers provided many important benefits, according to interviewed staff and partners. By visiting government and NGO workers confronting similar environmental challenges and economic and political constraints in other Asian countries, local partners were exposed to solutions that had already been tested in conditions more similar to their own than those in the U.S. and other developed countries. In addition, these local leaders developed a healthy sense of competition with their Asian peers. After observing the implementation



of new policies or improved management practices and technological solutions in other countries, exchange participants often came home asking, “If they can do it why can’t we?”

Some of the most successful US-AEP-supported regional initiatives have become institutionalized through the establishment of networks and regular conference gatherings. Important networks that have evolved with the help of US-AEP include the Southeast Asian Water Utilities Network (SEAWUN) and the Asian Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (AECEN). Other US-AEP supported regional gatherings of note included the Mayors Asia Pacific Environmental Summit (MAPES), the Clean Air Initiatives-Asia’s Better Air Quality (BAQ), and Asia Pacific Roundtable for Cleaner Production (APRCP) conferences.

To identify opportunities for such complimentary regional programming and derive the greatest benefit from this cooperation, program staff and partners stressed the need to *actively* foster regional interactions between program staff and key partners. Cross-fertilization between country programs was typically spawned when staff and partners had opportunities to gather regionally for meetings, conferences, or exchanges. Some staff and partners felt that opportunities for productive regional interaction were insufficient. Often when regional gatherings did take place, some of the interviewees noted that time was primarily allotted for program management issues, with too little time was left for developing regional cooperation. Some suggested that formalizing more regular communication between staff and partners from the different implementing countries would also have been helpful.



US-AEP co-sponsored Mayors’ Asia Pacific Environmental Summits (MAPES) in 2001 and 2003, which provided excellent networking opportunities and a public platform for mayors to commit to improving urban environmental conditions in the region.

At the same time, program participants also found that the most successful regional initiatives were those that developed out of self-defined, country-specific needs and demands. Initiatives driven largely by the interests of outside partners often had difficulty developing consistently at the local



level. Thus, the benefits of the regional nature of the program were most fully realized when a healthy balance was struck between sufficient attention to country-specific needs and active promotion of complimentary regional cooperation and interaction.

Partnership Approach: US-AEP promotion of partnerships between U.S. and Asian counterparts proved highly successful in addressing technically complex environmental pollution problems in Asia. US-AEP support of in-country partnering was also found to be effective in forging the local cooperation necessary to overcome these challenges. In fact, local-level, multi-stakeholder efforts and related promotion of public participation were hallmarks of the most highly regarded US-AEP projects.

Over the years many different types of partnerships were facilitated by US-AEP. Staff categorized US-Asia partnerships as primarily of two types: (1) professional peer-to-peer partnerships between private sector and public sector professionals, e.g., the partnership between the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and regional peers in the water utility industry that worked to improve technical and management training in several countries; and (2) government-to-government partnering, e.g., the partnering between USEPA and government environmental agencies in the region that worked to advance enforcement and regulation. As noted above, US-AEP also increasingly supported many effective Asia-to-Asia partnerships in later years. Such partnerships also included both professional and government pairings.

All US-AEP staff interviewed agreed that identification of the “right” local Asian partners was essential to US-AEP project success. To be sustainable, projects needed to be supported by knowledgeable, qualified and committed partners who could champion the projects over time. This commitment over the long-term was important as partnerships often took time to develop and mature before they became most effective. In attempts to identify local partners, the presence of US-AEP in-

“Through our partnership with Portland State University and US-AEP, we introduced new methods for community participation in cleaning up the canals in Ho Chi Minh City. We value Portland communities, businesses, and citizens as true partners in helping us achieve our mission to create a cleaner city.”

**DR. LAM MINH TRIET, DIRECTOR
INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT
AND RESOURCES, VIETNAM
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**



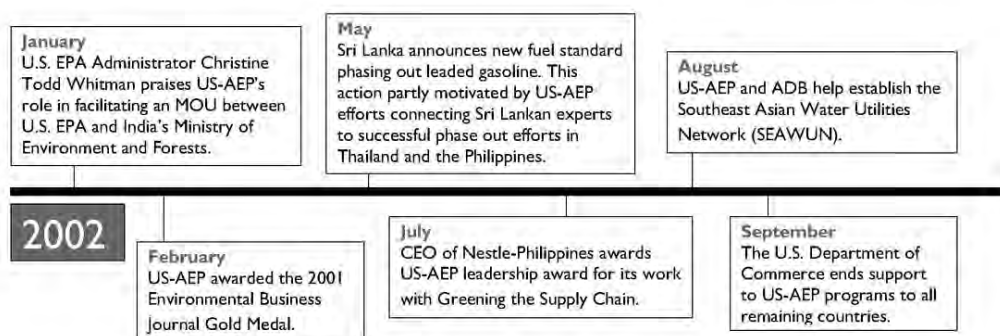
country program staff was considered essential. In particular, most interviewees believed that the participation of US-AEP staff in partnership development was especially effective, particularly when dealing with potential local government partners.

The most highly valued U.S. partners were described by interviewees as those most committed to following through in building long-term relationships in Asian countries. In addition, interviewees cited U.S. partners with a high-level of technical expertise as the most valued. The most effective U.S. partners also were those who dealt with problems in their own work that were similar in scale to the problems faced by their Asian counterparts, e.g. U.S. state organizations paired with smaller Asian countries, and municipal government officials that worked with Asian city government counterparts.

Regardless of whether partners were from Asia or the U.S., interviewees generally agreed that the most effective partners typically had a mix of good technical and management capabilities, and the ability to communicate effectively at the international level. They also were familiar with overarching cultural, political, and economic realities in Asia and possessed the ability to think “outside the box” in an adaptive and innovative manner. In addition, effective partners had access to internal resources sufficient to wait out project ramp-up or delays. Consistency in the participation of staff involved in partnership activities was also noted as being particularly important. As the Country Manager from US-AEP/Vietnam said, “Partnerships are people.” The key role that particular committed individuals played in building and maintaining effective US-AEP partner relationships cannot be overstated.

While identifying many characteristics of good partners, US-AEP staff and partners found it difficult to define a universal “good partner.” Interviewees noted that the success of partnerships typically depended on proper alignment of partner interests and project objectives. It was important when potential partners were identified that US-AEP evaluated their organizational goals to forecast how these organizations might respond to a partnership proposal. US-AEP then would try to “sell” the partnership concept to them by highlighting the benefits they would derive from participation. Activities would ultimately only be developed if organizations or individuals were clearly sold on the benefits of partnering.

Although partnering was a central and important program characteristic, staff stressed that the objective of partnership development should not be partnering itself, but rather a clearly



targeted result that all involved are committed to achieving. Similarly, US-AEP staff viewed the goal of trying to develop sustainable partnerships (an explicit goal in the US-AEP results reporting framework) to be relevant only if there was a specific purpose, e.g., building network partnering like SEAWUN to enable long-term cooperation on regional training and certification. The idea expressed by some was that it was always important to “put issues first, not partnering.” In the program’s attempts to promote such sustainable, long-term partnerships, it was found that the commitment of key individuals was essential in building up the relationships over time to the point where they could become institutionalized.

It was often challenging for US-AEP staff to find local partners that fully fit the desired partner criteria. As an alternative, US-AEP sometimes attempted to engage existing partners in new tasks outside, but related to, their current capabilities while supporting organizational capacity building through training, instruction on international business protocols, and promotion of professional association linkages (both national and international). For example, in India, US-AEP worked with a long-time local NGO partner to introduce voluntary environmental reporting through the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), an international movement to promote standardized public reporting of environmental performance by industry. US-AEP supplied a U.S. expert to work with NGO staff to develop and present training to local industry on GRI principles. The NGO now has the know-how, as well as a set of training materials, to continue these efforts on its own, and has started to engage with the international GRI organization.

Some staff thought that efforts to build the capacity of current and potential local partner organizations should have been a more central programmatic goal. These activities could have helped various organizations become more active internationally and develop professionally. Important professional skills that interviewees suggested US-AEP could have more actively helped develop in its local organization and individual partners included building capabilities to analyze technological needs, use critical thinking to propose solutions and assess proposed solutions using sound scientific criteria. One successful example cited of a case where US-AEP was able to build local capacity was US-AEP/Sri Lanka work with the Industrial Services Bureau (ISB). By engaging with ISB in a series of related activities over a number of years, US-AEP has helped the ISB build capacity in a number of areas, including wastewater management and cleaner and more efficient power generation.

Even while noting this one area for improvement, most interviewees felt that US-AEP did an excellent job of developing many U.S.-Asia and Asia-Asia links between key environmental



policy makers, technical specialists, and organizations that will result in successful on-going cooperation. Most also felt that the US-AEP exchange mechanism was particularly useful in this regard.

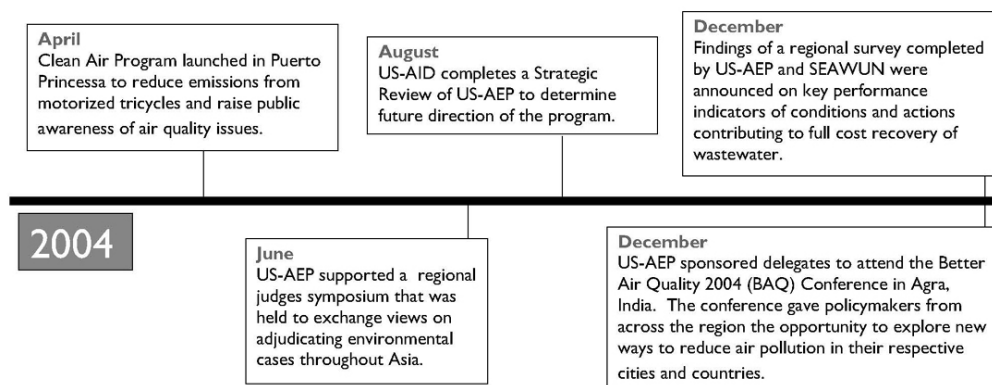
Use of Exchanges: An important element of partnership development was the opportunity for partners to meet face to face, an opportunity that was made possible through exchanges. Exchanges were defined as including the multitude of US-AEP-supported activities that brought people together to learn from one another. Through international and in-country travel, US-AEP supported the participation of environmental professionals in study tours, conferences, training programs, videoconferences, and consultations that allowed them to learn from, and be inspired by, counterparts with whom they could not ordinarily interact.

Many of those interviewed felt that effective use of the popular exchange mechanism was integral to development of US-AEP's favorable image in the region. Closely tracked participant feedback from US-AEP exchanges was consistently very positive. Given their central role in US-AEP and the fact that exchanges are rarely a central element of other donor programs in Asia, many Asian partners even came to view exchanges as the essence of the US-AEP program. As one Vietnamese partner put it, "US-AEP is exchanges." US-AEP staff did not, however, share this view; few of them ranked exchanges as an "essential" program characteristic. At the same time, most of these same staff viewed the interactions that exchanges allowed as vital to the achievements made by many US-AEP initiatives.

US-AEP staff provided many examples of the significant impact that exchanges had on participants. Exchanges often motivated participants to begin attempts to adopt new technologies or policies once they returned from visits. For example, a group from the Philippines visited the U.S. and learned about the effective role that an association of solid waste management professionals had played in improving solid waste management practices in North America. Upon returning to the Philippines, several of the participants began efforts to form the Solid Waste Association of the Philippines (SWAPP), an organization initially supported by US-AEP but now operating on a self-sustained basis.



Exchange to Maryland under the Chesapeake Bay-Laguna Bay-Thachin River Partnership



Mayor Mary Jane Ortega, one of SWAPP's founders and an exchange participant, has said the impact of exchanges in terms of "idea generation is super important."

Staff and partners felt that the most successful exchanges were those where extensive pre-planning was conducted. The best exchanges involved carefully identified participants who were prepared to actively participate in the exchange, and the right hosts who were well briefed on exchange objectives. Careful logistical work was also very important. As exchanges were often used to bring together senior policy makers to help build consensus on new policy initiatives, a missed airport pickup or lack of proper translation services could severely compromise the success of an otherwise well-structured exchange.

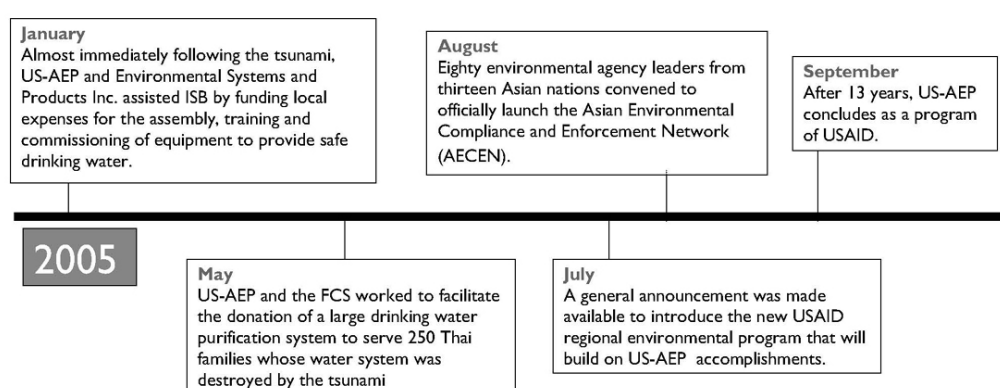
The most effective exchanges were also those that involved active and substantive follow-up. When US-AEP strategically supported follow-up activities through small grants and technical assistance, many successes resulted. Here again, as elsewhere in the program, a sense of balance was important – balanced use of a popular mechanism with focused follow-up using other program resources.

Other Important Program Characteristics:

In addition to the five key program characteristics discussed above, several US-AEP staff and partners mentioned two other important program characteristics: the US-AEP "brand" and the country-level US-AEP staff who worked on the program. Interviewees identified the US-AEP brand as the high profile and favorable reputation that US-AEP had developed over the years and enjoyed in the region. As a result of its long history, active engagement with local partners, and unique exchange support, US-AEP staff and implementing partners often found it easier to establish new partner relations or undertake new initiatives than it might have been, had they been promoting a relatively unknown entity. Interviewees also believed that having US-AEP staff working directly out of USAID offices helped to open doors locally, especially when dealing with local government partners.

CONCLUSION – STRIKING A BALANCE

Through over a decade of support to Asian countries, US-AEP made significant and often critical contributions to improving environmental conditions. Five program characteristics were found to be the most frequently cited as contributing to this success: ability to leverage other resources; programming flexibility/opportunism; regional program implementation; partnership approach; and use of exchanges. A central theme that emerged in discussions with US-AEP staff, and implementing and local partners was the notion of the



importance of carefully balancing application of the program's distinct features. In particular, it was important to balance:

- A flexible and responsive programming approach with sufficient planning and long-term commitment to important initiatives;
- Responsiveness to local, individual country needs with attention to regional and partner synergies;
- An emphasis on partnership building with attention to critical issues; and
- Use of exchanges with focused follow-up linked to other program resources.

On the whole, interviewees believed that US-AEP programs did a good job of achieving balance among the above elements. The move over time toward more complex, multi-year activities as the program matured made achieving that balance even more critical to the ultimate success of US-AEP initiatives.